

tips for handling layoffs

The layoff experience is foreign and uncomfortable to everyone. Those who have been through it before encourage you to read, study, question and ask for assistance before layoffs begin.

some basics for managers

- (1) Notify the people most affected by the layoffs first.
- (2) Remember that the method and manner in which layoffs are made have a direct impact upon the ability of an individual who is being laid off to accept the decision and move beyond it.
- (3) Think about how you would like to be treated if you were in the situation of an employee facing a layoff. Doing so will help you anticipate and prepare for the accompanying emotions.
- (4) Rely on your personnel assistant and your agency's personnel officer. Your personnel assistant can help with the paperwork necessary to ensure your employees receive everything they should along with any additional support they may want. The personnel officers at the Department of Administrative Services – Human Resources Enterprise (DAS-HRE) can help you through the entire process including figuring out how best to talk to employees about layoffs, arranging for informational sessions regarding benefits and unemployment, and helping to arrange outplacement assistance.
- (5) Be extra vigilant after you give layoff notices. Watch for actions that may indicate someone may hurt themselves or others. Don't take chances if you have concerns. Ask for help.
- (6) Continue to keep all employees informed about budgets and the impact on services and employees.

frequently asked questions from managers

Who should participate in the layoff meeting?

The meeting should include the employee to be laid off, his or her supervisor, and the individual responsible for the layoff decision in the department. It may also be helpful to include the personnel officer or personnel assistant. Remember to offer union-covered employees the option of having a union representative present.

When should the layoff meeting take place?

As soon as you have an approved plan (signed by the Governor's Chief of Staff and the DAS Director) that spells out who is affected, bumping rights, etc., you may proceed. You will want to consider timing your discussion for the end of a workday or workweek, whenever possible. Notify the individual to be laid off on the same day of the meeting. When scheduling, allow at least an hour for a meeting. If multiple layoffs are involved, try to schedule at least one hour between meetings.

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What physical setting works best?

A private, face-to-face meeting is essential.

What should happen in the meeting?

- (1) State the facts: “Your position has been selected for layoff.”
- (2) Explain the reason why layoffs are taking place, in general, and specific for this employee. You may want to share the *number* of layoffs in your department. If you wish, you may voice your regret for the fact that the need to manage the state’s budget has a negative impact on employees and their families.
- (3) Relate the facts regarding the layoff and present the layoff information packet that contains the official letter, schedule, and information about outplacement resources. Review the policies regarding bumping rights and grievance rights.
- (4) Review the outplacement assistance information that’s available in the packet.
- (5) Tell your employee who to contact in your department with additional questions or for further assistance.
- (6) Explain how information regarding the layoff will be communicated to the employee’s coworkers and work contacts, offering to consider any input the employee may wish to provide.
- (7) Explain how the employee will be expected to complete his or her work responsibilities during the remaining workdays.
- (8) Explain how security issues will be handled: handoff of keys, telephones, credit cards, access to information, etc.
- (9) Ask for questions, including how the employee would like to handle the remainder of the workday on which the meeting takes place.
- (10) Recap the key points of the meeting.

What should happen after the meeting?

Communicate with the department about the layoffs as soon as possible after individual employees have been notified in order to minimize the impact of the rumor mill. During and after the meeting, encourage remaining employees to express their feelings. Remind them to respect the legal rights and emotions of laid-off employees. Use the Employee Assistance Program if needed.

frequently asked questions from laid-off employees

The following list of questions is provided to help you anticipate questions you may hear from laid-off employees. Some of the questions concern management decisions; others concern facts of the layoff and are detailed in the information packets provided.

- (1) Why me?
- (2) Who decided?
- (3) How will you tell my coworkers and work contacts? What and when will you tell them?
- (4) What assistance is available to help me find other employment?
- (5) When will I receive my last paycheck?
- (6) When will my health insurance coverage expire, and how can I continue that coverage if I wish to do so?
- (7) What are my work responsibilities for the remainder of my employment period?
- (8) What are my recall rights?
- (9) What are my grievance rights if I don’t feel my layoff has been handled correctly?
- (10) Who can I contact if I have questions about my paycheck or deductions?
- (11) Where should I go if I have other questions?
- (12) Will someone help me through this?

frequently asked questions from other employees

Keep in mind that all employees are affected by a layoff. Those who are left may feel guilty that they still have a job or be angry about layoff decisions. They may worry. They are likely to closely watch how people are treated and whether or not the department and its future plans seem stable. The following is provided to help you anticipate questions you may hear from other employees.

- (1) Why were layoffs necessary? Couldn't they have been avoided through other actions?
- (2) Who made the decisions?
- (3) How were the decisions made?
- (4) Will there be any more layoffs?
- (5) What other changes are coming?
- (6) Who will cover the workload?
- (7) What are we going to do to manage resources so that more layoffs won't be needed?

other DAS-HRE resources to assist you

Your DAS-HRE Personnel Officer should be your agency's first call for help. You may also find the following helpful:

- Outplacement program and recall questions – Mary Ann Hills, 515-281-6770
- Insurance plans and COBRA – Rose Baughman, 515-281-8989
- Deferred Compensation – Jennifer Sandusky, 515-281-0569
- Flexible Spending – Jennifer Sandusky, 515-281-0569
- IPERS – 515-281-0020
- Employee Assistance Program Manager – Sheryl Jensen, 515-281-8866
- Employee Assistance Program – 515-244-6090 or 1-800-327-4692
- The Managers and Supervisors Manual, benefits information, job listings, and links to private employers on the DAS-HRE Web Site at: www.state.ia.us/idop.
- Special educational sessions can be arranged for your employees on any of the above topics. Contact your personnel officer if you are interested.